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### From Latin to French: Etienne Dolet (1509-1546) and the Rise of the Vernacular in Early Modern France

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From Latin to French: Etienne Dolet (1509-1546) and  
the Rise of the Vernacular in Early Modern France

Alexandra Powell

History Senior Thesis

Advisor: Professor Jonathan Elukin

Spring, 2012

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# 1 | Introduction

“Frenchmen, by the grace of the King of France...Our dear and well loved Master Sebastian Gryphius, printer in our city of Lyon, has told us that he will print, at great cost and expense, with great profit and promotion to the Latin language, a book titled *Commentarii Linguae Latinae, Stephano Doletto autore...*”<sup>1</sup>

So begins the preface to *Commentarii Linguae Latinae*, Etienne Dolet’s treatise on the Latin language, that included an extensive etymology and explication of all known Latin terms. However, the composition of the preface raises an important question. Why did Dolet, an avowed devotee of Cicero, introduce his celebration of Latin with a composition in “vulgar” French? The *Commentarii* was first published in 1536 and this preface, dated May of that year, is one of the first instances of what would become many in which Dolet, as a printer and as an author, utilized his unique position in Renaissance printing society to champion vernacular French.

Dolet’s personal story traces the larger theme of the shift from Latin to the vernacular in early modern Europe. His story is similar in some ways to that of other humanists who, gradually, came to use vernacular languages more and more in their writing. With a strong education in classical thought, Dolet began his academic life with a clear preference for Latin. Over the course of his career, he gradually changed to writing almost entirely in French.

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<sup>1</sup> [Francoys par le grace de Dieu Roy de France...Nostre cher, & bien aimé Maistre Sebastien Gryphius imprimeur ordinaire de nostre ville de Lyon, nous a faict dire, & remonstrer quil estoit apres a imprimer a ses grans frais, mises, & despens, & au grant profit, & promotion des lettres Latines, ung liure intitulé *Commentarii Linguae Latinae, Stephano Doletto autore...*]

Etienne Dolet, *Commentariorum linguae tomus Latinae* (Lyons: Gryphius, 1536), 1. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Dolet remains a problematic figure. His intellectual oeuvre did not secure his enduring legacy as a “genius” of the Renaissance. Therefore, his abiding legacy might instead stem from his dramatic and tragic death. Dolet, condemned for heresy on account of the nature of his translation of a phrase in Plato’s *Axiochus*, was burned at the stake. He remained, until the end, an avowed Catholic. However, the inherently humanist character of his work, combined with the many enemies he acquired throughout his vocal career, brought him under the suspicion of the Inquisition. Scholars such as Richard Copley Christie, who wrote a major biography of Dolet in 1880, have treated him as emblematic of the Renaissance humanist struggle against the parochialism of the French Inquisition. In my thesis, I wish instead to emphasize his life as a printer. I believe his experience as a printer influenced his transition to the vernacular. His desire to earn money, his commitment to achieve exalted intellectual status and his proximity to the common man were all facets of his printing career that contributed to his switch to the vernacular.

The turning point of Dolet’s internal transition from Latin to French is his publication of *La Manière de bien traduire* in 1540, in which he outlines how to translate well from one language to another. Dolet’s powerful ambition caused him to seek an intellectual and academic role in a society full of intellectual celebrities. *La Manière* is Dolet’s attempt to glorify the role of translator, his more celebrated profession, as the sacred mediator between languages and as the one who conveys classical knowledge to those who only understand the vernacular. *La Manière* is the culmination the gradual transition to the vernacular that occurred during Dolet’s life as a printer. It is also a

rationalization of this shift by a man who had previously made classical studies his life's intellectual commitment.

## Historical Legacy

Biographical literature on Dolet has evolved over five centuries of scholarship. The historical figure cut by Dolet has been interpreted differently by each generation of scholars. His controversial reputation while he lived, alluded to in sources such as his correspondence, evolved into an entirely new reception in the Enlightenment, when entries on him in the great *encyclopédies* suggested that he was a typical Renaissance humanist. Finally, the heroic image of him held by 19<sup>th</sup> century gentlemen scholars such as Richard Copley Christie eventually developed into a critical evaluation of his actual significance by modern linguistic scholars.

If we go back to his own time, we find Dolet had a contentious reputation. His contentious opinions and open disagreements with beloved figures such as Erasmus earned him many adversaries. In March, 1535, Erasmus wrote in a letter to a friend that Dolet's public denunciation of Erasmus' opinion towards Cicero was giving him a stomachache.<sup>2</sup>

Other friends of Erasmus such as Julius Caesar Scaliger insulted Dolet by calling him egotistical, uneducated or from a poor background. In one instance, Scaliger wrote, "Dolet may be called the canker or ulcer [*carcinoma aut vomica*] of the Muses. For

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<sup>2</sup> [Nunc narrant Lugduni excusam librum acidum in me, autore Stephen Dolet; cuius extant orationes et epistolae, stomachi magis cauendi quam mouendi. Eum nondum vidi et, si videro, non est animus respondere.]

Kenneth Lloyd-Jones, "Erasmus and Dolet on the Ethics of Imitation and the Hermeneutic Imperative," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 2, no. 1 (Summer 1995): 29.

besides that in so great a body, as Catullus says, there is not a grain of wit...A wretched prater, who out of scraps of Cicero has patched up certain wild *orations*, as he calls them...”<sup>3</sup> Fifteen years after the death of Dolet, Scaliger sustained his public hatred for Dolet by denigrating him further in a collection of poems.<sup>4</sup>

By 1697, when Pierre Bayle was compiling his *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, the entry on Etienne Dolet contained the following:

“DOLET (Etienne) good humanist, burned in Paris for his opinions on religion on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of August 1546, he was from Orleans. He worked on style of Latin & he composed some important works on this matter...He meddled in writing verse in Latin and in French & and he had some success.”<sup>5</sup>

In a marginal note, Bayle cites Dolet’s death with the names of the men from whom he heard the account. The first thing of note is that, at the time that this information was collected by Bayle, it was widely assumed that Dolet died for his faith, despite the fact he was an avowed Catholic until the end of his life. Theodore Beza, who later converted to Calvinism, eulogizes Dolet’s martyrdom in an ode composed at the time of Dolet’s death.<sup>6</sup> However, in another marginal note, Bayle also notes that Theodore Beza did not include Dolet in his list of all of the French men who had died for Lutheranism, and furthermore that Jean Calvin had placed Dolet in the realm of the impious.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, it

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<sup>3</sup> Richard Copley Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance, 1508-1546*. A biography (London: Macmillan, 1880), 207-208.

<sup>4</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 459.

<sup>5</sup> [DOLET (Etienne) bon Humaniste, brûlé à a Paris pour ses opinions sur la Religion le 3 d’Août 1546, étoit d’Orleans. Il travailla à la réforme du style Latin, & il composa d’assex bons Ouvrages sur cetter matiere...Il se mêloit de faire des Vers en Latin & en François, & n’y réussissoit pas mal.] Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. (Rotterdam: Chez Bohm, 1720), 300.

<sup>6</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 460.

<sup>7</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 460.

is clear that Dolet's actual religious beliefs were unclear even to his contemporaries. Lastly, Bayle's entry also reveals that Dolet's personal compositions were well-received and "pas mal" to Bayle's peers.

Roughly two decades after Bayle included Dolet in his *Dictionnaire*, Michel Maittaire devoted a large portion of his *Annales Typographici*<sup>8</sup> to the Renaissance translator. In the early years of the Enlightenment, Dolet was very well known by his countrymen. As people like Maittaire and Bayle sought to categorize and systematize knowledge, figures like Dolet, a Renaissance humanist who was killed by the Inquisition, certainly merited inclusion. However, Christie would eventually call Maittaire's work a "mémoire pour servir," a collection of any reference that Dolet made to himself in his own work as well as any mention of him by contemporaries.<sup>9</sup>

In 1779, Jean François Née de la Rochelle published *Vie de Dolet*, essentially a translation into French of most of Maittaire's research, combined with a short bibliography of Dolet's original compositions.<sup>10</sup> *Vie de Dolet* is the first of very few biographies on the translator. For the most part, both Maittaire's and Née de la Rochelle's studies are very straightforward accounts of Dolet's life. However, Née de la Rochelle reveals his opinion of Dolet in the introduction, in which he says, "I will attempt to defend a French printer against the enemies of his talents."<sup>11</sup> Née de la Rochelle was referring to the insulting remarks made after Dolet's death two centuries earlier by Julius Caesar Scaliger.

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<sup>8</sup> Michel Maittaire, *Annales Typographici* (Vaillant et Prevost: 1719), 564.

<sup>9</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, viii.

<sup>10</sup> J.F. Née de la Rochelle, *Vie d'Étienne Dolet: Imprimeur a Lyon dans le seizième siècle* (Slatkine Reprints: Geneva, 1970).

<sup>11</sup> Née de la Rochelle, *Vie d'Étienne Dolet: Imprimeur a Lyon dans le seizième siècle*, i.



While Enlightenment attitudes towards Dolet were largely objective studies of him as a “French printer,” later scholarship made him a martyr to free thought. By 1857, the French scholar Joseph Boulmier had dubbed Dolet “The Christ of free thought [le Christ de la pensée libre.]”<sup>12</sup> Boulmier’s self-proclaimed “dithyramb,” *Estienne Dolet: Sa vie, ses Oeuvres, son Martyre*, is the second complete biography of Dolet. Boulmier was unapologetically infatuated by Dolet and his works, devoting almost three hundred pages of text to laudatory remarks such as “he is, in my opinion, the most vigorous, the most complete personification and, so to speak, the incarnation of the “word” in this great era.”<sup>13</sup> Boulmier’s hyperbolic style is typical of the romanticized reception of the legend of Dolet in 19<sup>th</sup> century intellectual circles.

Christie, the first to publish scholarship on Dolet in English, echoed this admiration in *Etienne Dolet: Martyr of the Renaissance*. Christie dismisses Boulmier’s work as biased and overstated. However, I would argue that Christie’s biography, published in 1880, demonstrates similar excesses, not least the dramatic title. Christie begins chapter one with this singular sentence:

“The Renaissance was at once the precursor and the parent of the Revolution; a voice crying in that wilderness which mediaeval Christianity had made of the world, crying against asceticism and against superstition; pleading for a restoration of the true, the real, the natural; proclaiming, though sometimes with stammering lips, the divinity of nature; preparing the way for the revolution; and

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<sup>12</sup> Joseph Boulmier, *Estienne Dolet: Sa vie, ses Oeuvres, son Martyre* (Paris: Auguste Aubry, 1857), xiii.

<sup>13</sup> [il est, selon moi, le type le plus vigoureux, la personnification la plus complète, et, pour ainsi dire, l’incarnation, le verbe de cette grande époque.] Boulmier, *Estienne Dolet: Sa vie, ses Oeuvres, son Martyre*, xiii.

yet, like the Baptist of old, unconscious of what it was the forerunner.”<sup>14</sup>

Christie’s language continues in the same manner, often calling Dolet a hero or martyr of the Renaissance. The exaggerated rhetoric of Née de la Rochelle, Boulmier or Christie obscures the real significance of Dolet’s life. To understand Dolet’s biography, it is essential to find middle ground between the indifference of the Enlightenment and the exaggeration of 19<sup>th</sup> century attitudes toward him. It is impossible to prove if Dolet was an actual martyr to the Reformation because there is no extant evidence of his religious inclinations. At the very least, he carried the outward appearance of a Catholic. In the latter half of his career, he translated into French at least two Latin prayer books of Erasmus.<sup>15</sup> Instead of focusing on his problematic death, this project will argue for the importance of his work to translation and will therefore explain his embrace of the vernacular.

Dolet’s current reputation and place amongst modern scholarship is largely due to the success of Christie’s biography. Only a small group of scholars read it in English. However, after the 1886 French translation of *Etienne Dolet* by Casimir Stryienski, Dolet’s story became widely known in France.<sup>16</sup> He was a man who had died a terrible death during the Inquisition, and not a scholar who championed the French language through his life and work. After the circulation of the French translation, a statue of Dolet was erected in the Place Maubert.<sup>17</sup> Christie then published a second edition of *Etienne*

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<sup>14</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Le Chevalier Chrestien* (1542) and *Le vrai moyen de bien et catholiquement se confesser* (1542). Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 524-525.

<sup>16</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, vii. Preface to the 1889 edition.

<sup>17</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 1.

*Dolet* in 1900 in which he mentioned the success of his work in France as well as the translation by Stryenski.



Figure 4<sup>18</sup>

*Etienne Dolet: The Martyr of the Renaissance* is, to this day, the most exhaustive biography of Dolet. Christie owned most of the extant first editions of Dolet's work. Forty-four texts issued from the press of Etienne Dolet are now part of the Christie Collection, along with texts by Giordano Bruno and many other Italian and French

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<sup>18</sup> Statue d'Etienne Dolet, Place Maubert, Paris. Unidentified artist. 1880-90.  
[http://educators.mfa.org/objects/search?related\\_people\\_text=](http://educators.mfa.org/objects/search?related_people_text=)  
 The statue was inaugurated on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, 1889, and was destroyed by the Germans in 1942.  
 (Archives de France, <http://www.archivesdefrance.culture.gouv.fr/action-culturelle/celebrations-nationales/2009/litterature-et-sciences-humaines/etienne-dolet>)

Renaissance luminaries, at the John Rylands Library. The entirety of the collection is made up of over eight thousand books.<sup>19</sup>

Curiosity over his controversial reputation earned Dolet another ardent admirer. In 1980, Claude Longeon, then Professor and Renaissance scholar at Université de Saint-Etienne, published *Bibliographie des Oeuvres d'Etienne Dolet*. It was the first collection of all of the texts edited, translated, printed or written by Etienne Dolet. The reason for such an exhaustive work of scholarship is clear in the introduction to another collection, *Correspondance d'Etienne Dolet*, which Longeon compiled in 1982. Longeon expressed a passionate fascination with Dolet as a character, believing that his collected correspondence “forges the portrait, half legend and half truth, of an unstable, irascible and dangerous being.”<sup>20</sup> Longeon wished to collect primary sources on Dolet’s life so that people could form their own opinions of such a curious historical figure. He also edited a collection of Dolet’s *Préfaces*. In each work he makes clear in the introduction that he would like to learn the mystery of this “irascible” man, and encourages the reader to interpret Dolet’s own voice by reading his works.

Eventually, modern linguists looked to Dolet as a potential example of Renaissance attitudes towards language and translation. In 1984, Glyn P. Norton published *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and Their Humanist Antecedents*. Norton includes Dolet in his survey, the details of which will be discussed later.

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/searchresources/guidetospecialcollections/atoz/chrisitiecollection/>

<sup>20</sup> Etienne Dolet and Claude Longeon, *Correspondance*, (Geneva: Droz, 1982), 7.

Dolet's life that as a printer was crucial in his gradual transition from Latin to French. His writing of *La Manière* is the midpoint of this movement. *La Manière* is both the justification for the shift that was already occurring in his preferential language and also the rationalization for why a classical scholar would look to employ vernacular languages. *La Manière* is also a valorization of vernacular languages. Therefore, *La Manière* simultaneously represents the culmination of Dolet's evolution and also the turning point towards the remainder of his career when he preferred French. Finally, it is an illustrative example of how one man came to prefer the vernacular over Latin.

## 2 | Formation of a Classical Scholar in Renaissance France

In the summer of 1509, King Louis XII occupied Venetian territory, part of the drawn-out sequence of the Italian Wars that brought northern and central Europe into contact with Italian Renaissance thought. In July of that same summer, Erasmus of Rotterdam departed from Italy and headed across the Alps towards England, on the way discovering inspiration for his essay *The Praise of Folly*.<sup>21</sup> He had recently obtained his degree from the University of Turin as doctor of theology, and he went on to spend the next year learning the art of printing at the publishing house of Aldus Manutius in Venice.<sup>22</sup> By 1509, Sir Thomas More, the English statesman and humanist, was great friends with Erasmus, having worked with him on several translations.<sup>23</sup> In the summer of 1509, More had already conceived early ideas for his masterpiece on the ideal nation, *Utopia*.<sup>24</sup> By 1509, Marin Luther, an ordained priest, held a temporary position as a Master of Arts at the university in Wittenberg. A short three years later he received his doctorate of theology and, five years after that, he posted his Ninety-five Theses “On the Power of Indulgences” to the door of All Saints’ Church.<sup>25</sup> By 1509, Guillaume Budé, celebrated humanist councilor of François I who assembled the library at Fontainebleau,<sup>26</sup> had published *Annotationes...in quatuor et viginti Pandectarum libros* at the famous press

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<sup>21</sup> Johan Huizinga, *Erasmus of Rotterdam* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1952), 69-78.

<sup>22</sup> Huizinga, *Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 62.

<sup>23</sup> James McConica, “Thomas More as Humanist,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More*, ed. George M. Logan, 22-45. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 29.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 94.

<sup>25</sup> Albrecht Beutel, “Luther’s Life,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donald K. McKim, 3-19. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 8.

<sup>26</sup> Peter G. Bietenholz, Thomas Brian Deutscher, and Desiderius Erasmus, *Contemporaries of Erasmus: a Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 36.

of Badius Ascensius, frequented by luminaries such as Lefèvre d’Etaples, Erasmus, Pierre Danès and Pierre Vitré.<sup>27</sup> Jean Lemaire de Belges, a Flemish poet and historian received a royal privilege to print in July of 1509. He later went on to pay tribute to the vernacular by writing entirely in French, often subtly raising scholarly awareness of vulgar tongues<sup>28</sup> by examining them with wit and charm, for example in his *La concorde des deux langages*, in 1511.<sup>29</sup> Dolet would have surely noticed, even in his early years in classical language, the wide appeal of books written in the vernacular . On July 10, 1509, John Calvin was born in Picardy in Northern France.<sup>30</sup> It was into this dynamic world, on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1509, in Orléans, that Etienne Dolet was born.<sup>31</sup>

The birth of Dolet is shrouded in myth and mystery. One legend asserts that Dolet was the illegitimate son of François I. Bayle first mentions this tale with skepticism, followed by Maittaire. Boulmier finally puts rest to the lie in 1857, remarking, “History

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<sup>27</sup> Bietenholz, “Guillaume Budé,” in *Contemporaries of Erasmus: a Biographical Register of the Renaissance and Reformation*, 39.

<sup>28</sup> Joachim du Bellay later said, in the *Deffense*, “Jan le Maire de Belges me semble avoir premier illustré et les Gaules et la langue François, luy donnant beaucoup de motz et manieres de parler poëtiques, qui ont bien servy mesmes aux plus excellens de notre tens [In my opinion, Jan la Maire de Belges was the first to celebrate the French language, giving it many words and poetic manners of speech which serve well even the smartest of our time.]”

Joachim du Bellay, *Deffence et Illustration de la Langue François*, in *The Regrets, with The Antiquities of Rome, Three Latin Elegies and The Defense and Enrichment of the French Language: A Bilingual Edition*, edited and translated by Richard Helgerson, 317-417. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 364.

<sup>29</sup> Frederic J. Baumgartner, “Jean Lemaire de Belges,” in *Sixteenth-Century French Writers*, ed. Megan Conway, 249-255. (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006), 252.

<sup>30</sup> Alexandre Ganaczy, “Calvin’s Life,” translated by David L. Foxgrover and James Schmitt, in *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, ed. Donald K. McKim, 3-24. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>31</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 7.

has already taken liberty in believing that [François] qualified as a *Father of Letters*: it is useless to go on and say that he is furthermore a father of writers.”<sup>32</sup>

The majority of biographical information about Dolet comes from his own pen. Later in life, he maintained a thorough correspondence with Guillaume Budé as part of his network of connections across Europe. In his second letter to Budé, on April 22, 1534, he vehemently defends himself from rumors concerning his social class, writing that he was born “in how honorable and indeed distinguished a position among my fellow citizens I leave those to speak of who place virtue below birth.”<sup>33</sup> He further defended his birth in his *Oratio Secunda in Tholosam*, delivered in January of 1534, saying “my parents possessed neither antiquity of race, nobility of birth...yet they enjoyed uninterrupted prosperity...”<sup>34</sup> Perhaps it was because his parents “neither attained very exalted rank nor became in any other way conspicuous”<sup>35</sup> that Dolet was so ambitious to achieve recognition in the European world of letters. Dolet’s humble beginning might have been a contributing factor to his later support of the journeymen printers of Lyons in their struggle against the upper-class master printers. Language was a class indicator in Dolet’s life. Born into the middle classes, he sought self-aggrandizement through mastery of Latin, only to later return in his career to print and work in French, the language of his countrymen, the “Francoys.”

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<sup>32</sup> [L’histoire s’est déjà montré assez libérale envers il quand elle a crue devoir le gratifier du surnom de Père des lettres: il est inutile d’en faire encore le père des litterateurs.]

Boulmier, *Estienne Dolet: Sa vie, ses Oeuvres, son Martyre*, xiii.

<sup>33</sup> Dolet, *Correspondance*, 121.

<sup>34</sup> Etienne Dolet, Kenneth Lloyd-Jones, and Marc van der Poel, *Les Orationes duae in Tholosam d’Etienne Dolet (1534)* (Geneva: Droz, 1992), 161.

<sup>35</sup> Dolet, *Orationes*, 121-126.





Figure 1<sup>36</sup>

Biographers are uncertain as to how Dolet obtained his Latin education, a privilege not readily available to middle class boys.<sup>37</sup> The opportunity allowed “his taste for letters to have full play”<sup>38</sup> and was pivotal to his later career and ambition. The early classical education was necessary for his entrance into the world of letters, yet it also created his obsession with Latin. While he composed poetry and prose frequently in classical languages, he would not write original work in French until *La Manière* in 1540. Dolet began his classical studies, mentioned in a letter to Budé, when he arrived in Paris

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<sup>36</sup> Fig. 1, Anthony Gryphius, Etienne Dolet, 1573. Woodcut engraving. *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*. By Richard Copley Christie. London: Macmillan, 1880: xvi.

The engraving appeared in Duverdier’s *Le Prosopographie* (Lyon, 1573). Christie claims that the book was only printed by Anthony Gryphius (son of the printer Sebastian Gryphius). Anthony would have known Dolet when he was young and the general impression of a balding man was agreed upon by many residents of Lyon, as well as his appearance of being aged beyond his years.

<sup>37</sup> Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 194-197.

<sup>38</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 11.

at the age of twelve.<sup>39</sup> He studied in Paris from 1521 to 1526, and there he came to adore Cicero and sought to imitate his style in all that he wrote,<sup>40</sup> calling him the “father of the Latin tongue.”<sup>41</sup> In Paris he studied under Nicholas Berauld, a scholar of Latin, greatly admired by men such as Erasmus.<sup>42</sup> Dolet quickly became enamored of the study of Latin. Under Berauld’s tutelage, at the age of sixteen Dolet conceived the idea for his *Commentarii*.<sup>43</sup>

Dolet moved from Paris to Padua at the age of seventeen to attend the university, which, at the time, was the hub of a “Ciceronian” movement. Longolius, whom Christie refers to as “the Ciceronian *par excellence*,” dominated the intellectual culture of the university.<sup>44</sup> His lectures, delivered at Padua in the first half of the sixteenth century, incited a passionate intellectual debate at the time on the nature of imitation, which directly influenced Dolet’s theory of translation. After hearing these lectures, Erasmus wrote *Ciceronianus* in 1528, specifically deriding Longolius and his idea that imitation of Ciceronian style surpassed any modern rhetoric or writing.<sup>45</sup> Dolet wrote a riposte 1535, *Imitatione Ciceronianus Adversus Erasmus*, defending Longolius’ theories of Ciceronian imitation.

Those in favor of Ciceronian imitation, including Dolet, believed that mimicking the style of classical scholars such as Cicero is the most perfect approach to rhetorical

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<sup>39</sup> Dolet, *Correspondance*, 125.

<sup>40</sup> Dolet, *Correspondance*, 125.

<sup>41</sup> [Cicero in *Lingua Latina Deus Doleti*]

Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 13.

<sup>42</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 15.

<sup>43</sup> Dolet, *Correspondance*, 57.

<sup>44</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 18.

<sup>45</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 19.

composition. Furthermore, those who sided with Dolet believed that issues of how to interpret and transmit the spirit of a text (*res / sentential*) through words (*verba*) could only be resolved by use of Cicero's theory in *De Oratore*.<sup>46</sup> Dolet's early ideas concerning Ciceronian imitation in rhetoric directly influenced his theory that the translator must not only translate the literal contents of a text, but also attempt to imitate the style of the original author. By imitating the pleasant style of a classical author in a vernacular translation, *traducteurs* would therefore also be enriching the linguistic style of the vernacular language. This will be discussed further in the explication of *La Manière*.

Dolet reserved the role of translator to people of education. No less crucial for expertise in translation is Dolet's related belief that a text must be subjected to the concentrated scrutiny of an interpreter equipped with clear capability of understanding the material.<sup>47</sup> This insured that uneducated men did not perform translation in a word-for-word manner, something that would result in an unpleasant utilitarian text. Dolet's faith in Ciceronian imitation led him to instead consecrate translation as a painstaking process that resulted in a beautifully composed vernacular text.

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<sup>46</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 188.

<sup>47</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 187.

Figure 2<sup>48</sup>

After Padua, Dolet acted as secretary to Jean de Langeac, Bishop of Limoges, who convinced Dolet to study law, a more lucrative and stable profession than that of a scholar. The correspondence between de Langeac and Dolet underscores Dolet's true ambitions, as he tells de Langeac that "study and fame were all he desired,"<sup>49</sup> a recurring sentiment in his personal letters that further suggests that ambition was crucial in his life. However, realizing the practicality of his patron's advice, Dolet eventually enrolled as a law student at the University of Toulouse. Dolet despised Toulouse, believing the city to be the heart of the French Inquisition. He imagined the Toulouse as devoid of intellectuals and he longed to return to the circle of learned men that he had left in Padua. His derogatory opinions were public knowledge, making him target of the Inquisition.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Fig. 2, University of Padua c. 1600. Woodcut engraving. Science Photo Library.  
<http://www.sciencephoto.com/media/230218/enlarge>

<sup>49</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 46.

<sup>50</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 45-47.

While in Toulouse, Dolet worked on his commentary on the Latin language. His overarching intellectual goal was to prove Cicero's style superior to that of Sallust, Caesar, Terence and Livy.<sup>51</sup> Dolet's admiration for Ciceronian style knew no bounds, and he made abundantly clear his intention to dedicate his career to the study of the great classical scholar.

His continuing commitment to Latin is also evident in his experience in The Floral Games of Toulouse. The Floral Games were a great and ancient tradition of Toulouse meant to celebrate the langue d'oc in the tradition of the troubadours of Occitan. Local literary celebrities competed for prizes in poetry. In 1532 or 1533 Dolet submitted ten verses in Latin. He did not win and, as Christie stated, "modesty or self-deprecation was not a characteristic of our hero."<sup>52</sup> It was rumored that he was quite ill tempered at this perceived slight.<sup>53</sup> Taking into consideration Dolet's later pioneering work on translation, it is strange that Dolet would have submitted Latin poems to the Games instead of French. Dolet's stubborn connection to Latin indicates the distance he traveled to embrace French.

Dolet's lack of success in composing his own work for The Floral Games inspired him to seek recognition in the academic world through another channel, that of becoming a Master Printer. In owning his own printing press, Dolet could have constant contact with the literature he adored. He would also elevate his social status to that of Master Printer. The most popular literary figures of Dolet's world were men like Rabelais and

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<sup>51</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 47.

<sup>52</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 93.

<sup>53</sup> John Charles Dawson, *Toulouse in the Renaissance: The Floral Games; University and Student Life; Etienne Dolet (1532-1534)* (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 47.

Erasmus. Dolet's compositions did not receive the same popularity.. *La Manière* found some success that might be attributed to the novelty of the idea of writing a treatise on translation. At least three new editions were released in Dolet's lifetime.<sup>54</sup> None of Dolet's other works appear to have been that widely circulated, save for his controversial disagreement with Erasmus, *Imitatione Ciceronianus Adversus Erasmus*. Dolet understood his relative lack of contemporary acclaim, prefacing *La Manière* with:

“If I knew that my work would be agreeable to you, I should be more inclined to take pains with it and to complete it. I expect however it will have more success with posterity, than with the present age, for the course of human affairs is such, that the excellence of the living is always envied and disparaged by detractors, who think to increase their own reputation by despising the labours of others.”<sup>55</sup>

Dolet's experiences in Toulouse contributed in other ways to the reputation that would later condemn him, as well as to his transition from preference for Latin to French. University life in Toulouse was arranged and divided between “nations,” or provincial areas. The first were the French of the Loire as distinguished from the Aquitains or the Gascons. The French of the Loire believed themselves to be true French while those of southern France, the Acquitains or the Gascons, belonged to the culturally lower peoples of the pays d'oc.<sup>56</sup> This rivalry culminated in grand orations delivered one against the other. The orations reveal the extreme importance placed on rhetoric. Nationalism as a cultural conception was only just taking hold. The orations in one way valorized classical

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<sup>54</sup> Etienne Dolet, *Bibliographie des Oeuvres D'Etienne Dolet, Ecrivain, Editeur et Imprimeur*, ed. Claude Longeon (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1980), 60-64.

<sup>55</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 343.

<sup>56</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 95-99.

language. Then, they also played a role in the birth of a French national identity, which drew on vernacular French.

Dolet delivered his first oration in late 1533,<sup>57</sup> attacking both the Gascons and the city of Toulouse as bastions of ignorance and parochialism, while also defending himself against accusations that he was too devoted to Cicero. Pierre Pinache of Gascon, a large man and imposing orator, responded vehemently to Dolet's attack. Dolet countered, in January of 1534, with his second oration.<sup>58</sup> His unapologetically critical diatribe, though it included ample praise of France, the French (those of the Loire) and François I, "gave his enemies a handle they were not slow to take hold of."<sup>59</sup> Dolet was arrested in March for killing a man in self-defense and spent most of the spring in prison, eventually being released at the request of his remaining powerful friends and patrons.<sup>60</sup> While in prison, he manipulated his connection with Jean de Langeac in order to contact Guillaume Budé for the first time. Connection with Budé meant possible future contact with François I and a potential privilege to establish a printing press.<sup>61</sup>

June of 1534 found Dolet en route to Lyons. Having been released from prison, he was anxious to leave inquisition-ruled Toulouse. Furthermore, he had conceived of the idea to enter the intellectual world through opening a printing press. He had already written to his friend, Guy Breslay, in 1532, that he absolutely did not want to continue his education in law and would like to instead be a man of letters.<sup>62</sup> Dolet would do anything

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<sup>57</sup> Dolet, *Orationes*, 3.

<sup>58</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 99-100.

<sup>59</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 102-103.

<sup>60</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 129.

<sup>61</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 130.

<sup>62</sup> Dolet, *Correspondance*, 17.

to make his name known. He had a fervent desire to become an intellectual, noting in a letter to his mentor de Langeac, during his time studying law at Toulouse, “My nature is to always learn; But if it becomes that I pass any days without learning anything in some place, then I must move.”<sup>63</sup>

Dolet changed cities often; he moved when it was necessary and when it was not. He might have to run from the law or he might simply grow bored of an environment. This wanderlust is characteristic of European Renaissance intellectuals and it began for Dolet very early in life. He wanted to return to his intellectual circle in Padua but it was legally impossible for him to leave France. Furthermore, his newest connections were in the great humanist printing capital of Renaissance France: Lyons. Lyons was a center of progressive culture, literature and science, home to Louise Labé and many other writers who were publishing in the vernacular. Budé and de Langeac aided Dolet in contacting Sebastien Gryphius, the prolific German printer in Lyons of books in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish and French.<sup>64</sup> Exposure to the vibrant city of Lyons, full of vernacular writers, humanists, printers and religious conflict, contributed to Dolet’s eventual transition towards favoring vernacular French over Latin in his editorial choices and personal writing.

In addition to the city of Lyons being a center for humanists, it was also one of the established major printing centers in Renaissance France, joined by Paris, Rouen,

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<sup>63</sup> [Mon naturel est d’apprendre toujours; Mais si ce vient que je passé aucuns jour Sans rien apprendre en quelque lieu ou place Incontinent il faut que je déplace.]

Christie, Étienne Dolet : *The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 46.

<sup>64</sup> Christie, Étienne Dolet : *The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 172.



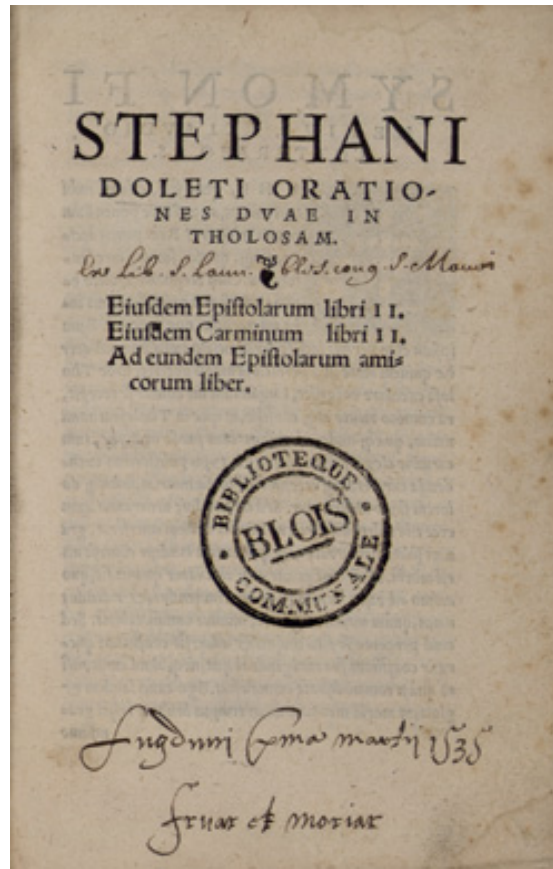
Toulouse, Poitiers, Bordeaux, and Troyes.<sup>65</sup> Lyons was also the first French city to produce a book in French from its presses. In 1473, Guillaume Regis printed the New Testament in French, as well as an abridgement of the Old Testament.<sup>66</sup> The vibrant world of print culture played an equal role to the dynamic humanist city in influencing Dolet's movement towards French. It was in Lyons that Dolet found his niche as a printer, a natural compromise for his academic and economic ambitions.

On the way to Lyons, Dolet found time to complete and publish, through his new friend Sebastien Gryphius, his two orations along with a set of his correspondence written while he was in prison. Distributing these documents, full of scathing remarks about Toulouse, the Inquisition, and most of Dolet's intellectual adversaries, was a brazen move. His impetus for doing so is unclear. Perhaps it was his overwhelming desire to become famous that causes him to circulate such controversial material. Dolet was an avowed Catholic with no obvious heretical views. However, in France, any scholarship that did not praise of the Church was suspect. *Orationes Duae in Tholosam Eisudem Epistolarum libri* earned Dolet, already a controversial character for his open criticism of the narrow theological dogma that made up the University's curriculum, additional enemies. Dolet's inability to be discreet recurred throughout his life and only ended at the tragedy that was his "martyrdome." His antagonism to the Church also brought increased scrutiny on his translation.

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<sup>65</sup> Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 193.

<sup>66</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 165.

Figure 3<sup>67</sup>

Dolet was eventually able to open his own press in Lyons and printed *La Manière* in 1540. In 1544, Dolet included in his *Second Enfer* a translation from Greek into French of Plato's *Axiochus*. It was this work that led to his ultimate condemnation. The Faculty of Theology at the Sorbonne in November of 1544 condemned his book:

“A sentence from a certain book of Plato translated into French by a certain Dolet was read, which is as follows, *après la mort tu ne seras plus rien du tout* [after death, you will no longer be anything at all.] It was judged to be heretical, agreeing in the opinion of the Sadducees and the Epicureans, wherefore it was committed to the

<sup>67</sup> Fig. 3, Sebastien Gryphius, *Orationes duae in Tholosam*, 1534. 8° Title page. Les Bibliothèques Virtuelles Humanistes. <http://www.bvh.univ-tours.fr/Consult/index.asp?numfiche=695>

deputies in matters of faith to pronounce a censure upon the same book...in the dialogue called *Acochius* the passage *attendu que tu ne seras plus rien du tout* is wrongly translated and is contrary to the intention of Plato, in whose work neither in the Greek nor in the Latin are there these words *rien du tout*.”<sup>68</sup>

Dolet died, in some sense, for his commitment to vernacular translation. He was willing to translate anything, even texts that carried dangerous and heretical connotations. In the case of *Axiochus*, he had denied the immortality of the soul by suggesting that Plato said, “after death, you will no longer be anything at all.” Dolet’s death did not result from his suggesting a major point of theological controversy; rather, it resulted from his dedication to translating in a certain style. By incorporating the phrase “rien du tout,” Dolet believed he was better conveying Plato’s meaning. He did this in the face of the Church and was technically condemned for this point.

The trial of Dolet lasted two years, ending finally with a sentence to death. On his thirty-eighth birthday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1546, Dolet was burned at the stake at the Place Maubert in Paris.<sup>69</sup>

Later historians have romanticized Dolet because of the tragedy of his trial and death. The fact that Dolet was executed for a vernacular translation led many to consider him a martyr of the progressive humanist movement in their struggle with a corrective Church. I would by no means deny this. However, it is important to consider other aspects of Dolet’s life and work. He is equally important for his part in the transition

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<sup>68</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 444.

<sup>69</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 456.

from Latin to vernacular usage in early modern Europe. The following chapters will explore different aspects of Dolet's embrace of the vernacular.

### 3 | The Printer

*Preserve moy O Seigneur des calumnies des hommes*<sup>70</sup>

Understanding Dolet's career as a printer is crucial to understanding the transition from Latin to French that culminates in his theory on translation. Dolet's ambition to gain intellectual status was his primary reason for entering the printing world. He gained recognition and prestige by becoming a master printer. In his role as master printer, Dolet was also in close contact with the journeymen printers he employed at his press. Perhaps because of his humble beginnings, he felt certain solidarity with them. Their literacy in vernacular languages would have influenced his eventual preference to print in French. Finally, Dolet also sought to aggrandize himself in service to his country. By printing in French, he helped to create the language of newly forming national culture. Printed text gave a sense of concreteness to vernacular languages and allowed for a widespread standardization of what had been previously oral languages.

Elizabeth Eisenstein expands on this notion of concreteness, combining it with a “‘subliminal’ impact upon scattered readers of repeated encounters with identical type styles etc.”<sup>71</sup> Dolet likely printed the first three sections of *L’Orateur françois: Le Maniere de bien traduire d’une langue en aultre*<sup>72</sup>, *La punctuation de la langue*

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<sup>70</sup> [Preserve me, O Lord, from the calumnies of men]

The motto that often accompanied his printers' device at the end of texts in French. It is interesting to note that he had separate mottoes in Latin (*Durior est spectatae virtutis quam incognita conditio*) and the vernacular.

Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 322.

<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 154.

<sup>72</sup> Dolet, *La Manière de bien traduire d’une langue en aultre* (Livres Généraux), 4.

*francoyse*<sup>73</sup>, and *Les accents de la langue francoyse*,<sup>74</sup> because of his sustained contact with problems in consistency of vernacular grammar and spelling. It was practical for him to issue a guide on French grammar and punctuation, because it helped to make his press and works more uniform and professional.

The commercial aspects of printing also influenced Dolet's attitude toward the vernacular. Aware of his modest origins, Dolet was fiercely ambitious to succeed in Lyons, gaining both money and fame. The economic benefit of printing in vernacular languages was clear. Contemporary prose and poetry, as well as translated editions of classical texts, were Renaissance bestsellers.<sup>75</sup> The bibliography of works issued from Dolet's press reveal that he capitalized on vernacular texts, frequently reprinting books that had initially sold well, such as Jean Canappe's translation of Galen in 1538, *Le Quatorzieme Livre de la Methode Therapeutique de Claude Galien*.<sup>76</sup> On more than one occasion, he was even accused of plagiarizing by taking already published texts and reprinting them at his press without permission at low cost to himself.<sup>77</sup> Most notably, he unlawfully reprinted Rabelais' *La vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel*.<sup>78</sup>

Dolet's profession as a Master Printer during the Lyonnaise Renaissance was full of contradictions. He published French translations of lighthearted Spanish romances, such as, *Du Mespris de la Court*, as frequently as highbrow academic texts. He wrote his own texts, such as reflections on Cicero and poems in neo-Latin, while also managing a

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<sup>73</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 7.

<sup>74</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 11.

<sup>75</sup> Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.), 160.

<sup>76</sup> Henri-Jean Martin, Roger Chartier, and Jean-Pierre Vivet. *Histoire de l'édition française* (Paris: Promodis, 1983), 267.

<sup>77</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 263-279.

<sup>78</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 264.

business. He was not alone in this role, part merchant and part scholar. He was actually one of the most examples of what it meant to have this dual responsibility, both creator and distributor of intellectual texts. He functioned in a role of the utmost necessity to the evolution of language during the Renaissance, that of printing in the vernacular for the growing middle class, while also writing academic texts (*Imitatione Ciceronianus Adversus Erasmus*) that guaranteed his role amongst respected intellectuals.

Exposure to the vernacular world of the printing business led to Dolet's intellectual embrace of the vernacular. He was firstly attracted by the economic benefit of printing popular vernacular texts. He then recognized the value of spreading knowledge to those who could only read in the vernacular. Like the *Commentarii*, he addresses *La Manière* to the French people, writing “wanting to illuminate you by all means, I have composed in our language...”<sup>79</sup>

Chez Dolet, and all other early modern printing presses, was a medium for any information that might be transmitted through text. The instrument for this circulation of knowledge was the book. The manner in which this information was presented to the public, the mechanism of the actual book as an object, is almost as important as the text itself. The portability of books issued from Dolet's and others' presses made access to standardized vernacular language possible for a larger number of people. For example, in 1544, Dolet translated a collection of Cicero's letters and they were published as *Epistres familiars de Marc Tulle Cicero* by Jehan Ruelle in Paris. The pocket-sized book was clearly meant to be read and shared. Furthermore, Dolet clearly states his pedagogical interest on the title page, stipulating that Cicero's text was to be “with summaries and

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<sup>79</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 3.

arguments for the greater understanding hereunto [*Avec leurs Sommaires, & Arguments pour plus grande intelligence d'icelles.*]"<sup>80</sup> Smaller books written in common languages worked to popularize literature further intellectual progress.

## Etienne Dolet, Master Printer

Dolet's previous introduction to Sebastian Gryphius proved to be extraordinarily beneficial to his career. Christie claims that Gryphius was "the head of the profession" when Dolet arrived in 1534, operating a press that printed in Hebrew, Greek and Latin as well as Italian, Spanish, and French.<sup>81</sup> Gryphius' career represents a dual printer/scholar divide similar to that of Dolet. Although Gryphius never wrote his own *chef-d'oeuvres*,<sup>82</sup> his dedications and prefaces are literary works in and of themselves. Gryphius is emblematic of the type of professional who advanced enlightened concepts through his careful selection of texts to publish. His choice, and that of other professionals like him, to print in a variety of vernacular languages played an incalculable role in the overall vernacular movement. Gryphius was mentor to Dolet and would have been an influence on Dolet's eventual preference for French. Gryphius, and eventually Dolet, were willing to risk their life for their progressive humanist work. For example, when the study of Hebrew was forbidden at the Sorbonne for being impious, Gryphius printed the great Hebrew Lexicon of Sanctii Pagnini at Lyons.<sup>83</sup> Gryphius' press, and those of his contemporaries, also provided learning spaces for aspiring writers. Rabelais and Dolet

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<sup>80</sup> Etienne Dolet and Cicero, *Epistres familières de Marc Tulle Cicero* (Iehan Ruelle: Paris, 1544). The Beinecke Manuscript Library.

<sup>81</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 166.

<sup>82</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 166.

<sup>83</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 167.



were both readers and correctors at Gryphius' press.<sup>84</sup> In early modern Europe, the work of the master printer was at the forefront of vernacular dissemination and standardization. This was because of the quotidian work of typesetting, which demanded that vernacular languages be uniform and systematized. It was also because of the patriotic component of the job, wherein he could claim in a preface that he was printing in the vernacular on behalf of his countrymen. Lastly, his editorial choices in printing modern vernacular prose and poetry, as well as frequent commissions for translations of classical texts, created a ready supply for a growing demand in printed vernacular books.

In Lyons, Gryphius facilitated the founding of Dolet's his own press. In a letter to a friend, Dolet wrote, of Gryphius, "I found him to be a man full of learning and kindness, and most worthy of the friendship of all learned men. He...wished me to take up my residence with him; but whilst I was most grateful for his kindness, I was unwilling to be a burden to him."<sup>85</sup> His sentiments indicate that Dolet might have been surprised to find Gryphius, superficially a tradesman, could also be of the intellectual class. The reconsideration of this prejudice, on meeting Gryphius, might have been part of the reason Dolet decided to earn his own living by printing, as he too wanted more than anything to be known as a man of letters.

Dolet's most important work in Latin, and his life's dream up to that point, was finally printed at the press of Gryphius in 1536. *Commentariorum linguae tomus Latinae*,<sup>86</sup> the first volume of the *Commentarii*, is a formidable work that traces the

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<sup>84</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 167.

<sup>85</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 173.

<sup>86</sup> Etienne Dolet, *Commentariorum linguae tomus Latinae*. (Gryphius: Lyons, 1536). The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

etymology of every Latin word known to Dolet. It also contains extensive commentary on Latin grammar and rhetoric. The publication of the *Commentariorii* was Dolet's attempt to break into the class of intellectuals who made their profession in scholarly, pan-continental dialogue on philosophy, religion and literature. The depth with which he explores Latin in the *Commentarii* proves the obsession with classical structure that he harbored early in his career. Original editions of *Tomus primus* and *Tomus secundus* are extant at Yale University today. The imposing shape and appearance of the massive books immediately defines that they were written and printed specifically for an educated and specialized audience. Each tome, measuring one foot by one and a half, is encased in a thick, red, gilded binding and the pages are painted in gold. Nothing about these books as structural objects would have invited a common reader to open them; their composition in Latin would have made the material inside completely inaccessible any exclusively vernacular readers. The *Commentariorii* represent the Latin starting point of Dolet's literary and publishing career.

The frontispiece of the first edition of the *Commentariorii* further reveals Dolet's early and fervent devotion to antiquity. It is a grandiose hierarchy of classical and biblical thinkers. Salomon Rex is the apex, surrounded by Aristotle, Plato, Socrates and Pythagoras. On either side of the title are representations of Cicero, Quintilian and Plutarch, and at the very bottom is a frieze of nymph-like women named "Allopie" and "Olimnia." Dolet's invocation to classical references would later evolve into his championing of vernacular heroes such as Gargantua.

Figure 5<sup>87</sup>

<sup>87</sup> *Commentariorum linguae latinae*, (Lyons: Sebastian Gryphius, 1536). The woodcut engraving, complete

After working for some years at the press of Gryphius, Dolet was finally able to obtain a printer's privilege from François I that allowed him to open his own business. On March 6, 1538, the King issued the license that forbade all other persons to "print or expose for sale, either within the kingdom of France or elsewhere, books copied from those of Dolet, for the space of ten years from the date of the publication of such books respectively."<sup>88</sup>

Therefore, an amicable friendship remained between Dolet and his former mentor Gryphius. Indeed, upon examination of certain of the texts it is abundantly clear that the font and several of the woodcuts used by Dolet in his early years as printer are identical to those of Gryphius.<sup>89</sup> Therefore, it is highly likely that Gryphius loaned used type and wood blocks to his young and enterprising apprentice. With Gryphius' help, Dolet became a respected member of the printing world.

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with Gryphius' device, is in the style of Holbein the Younger and is used in several other publications. Bibliothèque Nationale, <http://classes.bnf.fr/page/grand/003.htm>.

<sup>88</sup> These privileges were necessary for the sustenance of the printing industry, which would be ruined by competition amongst presses if there were not laws about piracy. Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 321.

<sup>89</sup> In the Beinecke Library, *Nicolai Borbonii uan Doperani Lingonensis Nugarum libri octo* by Nicolas Bourbon, printed by Simon Gryphius in 1538 and *Stephani Doleti Galli Carminum libri quatuor* written and published Chez Dolet in 1538, share extraordinarily similar type faces.

Figure 6<sup>90</sup>

In 1538, the journeymen of Lyons led a series of strikes against the master printers. They wanted better wages on account of the higher cost of living.<sup>91</sup> Dolet readily sided with the journeymen, earning him even more enemies amongst the upper classes.<sup>92</sup> The feud between Dolet and the other master printers of Lyons was an old one. The master printers, upon the opening of his press, ridiculed Dolet for his humble beginnings, believing him too common to operate a press. In the preface to his translation of the *Tusculan Disputations* in 1543, he addresses King François I, saying, “At this commencement of my undertaking the booksellers of this city (Lyons), knowing that I

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<sup>90</sup> William Roberts, “Printers Marks: A Chapter in the History of Typography,” in *The Project Gutenberg Ebook of Printers’ Marks*, William Roberts, 2008. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/25663/25663-h/25663-h.htm#fig133>

<sup>91</sup> Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 2.

<sup>92</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 325.

had not such ample store of this world's goods as they had, ridiculed me very much.”<sup>93</sup>

However, Dolet's persevered, and he continues “not on this account induced to give up my plan...it came to pass that no printer or bookseller in Lyons acquired a higher reputation for correctness as a printer...”<sup>94</sup> Dolet bridged a divide in society, having risen himself in social status. Dolet's alliance with the journeymen parallels his championing of French, as it suggests his interest in allowing literacy and a better quality of life to spread beyond the classes.



Figure 7<sup>95</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 327.

<sup>94</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 327.

<sup>95</sup> Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Britannie utriusque regum et principum origo* (Paris: Baldius Ascensius, 1517). <http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/firstimpressions/From-Manuscript-to-Print/Technology-of-the-Book/Composing-how-type-was-set/>

“An early 16th-century printing house. On the right a compositor sets type from copy held open on a stand. In his right hand he holds a composing stick.”

Literacy, amongst journeymen, is a fascinating channel through which to explore the movement towards universal education that had its roots in the Renaissance. Print journeymen spent their professional lives in the presence of words, and often prided themselves on their level of literacy relative to other craftsmen.<sup>96</sup> Growing literacy had a direct linkage with growing demand for vernacular books.

Perhaps the fastest growing sector of the vernacular book market was medical treatises. A developing niche of barber surgeons, *chirurgiens*, provided a lucrative market for medical texts published in French.<sup>97</sup> Dolet, along with other employees of his printing house, frequently translated classical medical theory into French. Dolet printed many translations by Jean Cannape, a *médecin* in Lyons at the time who translated most of Galen. The middle class surgeons were not fluent in Latin and accessibility to French texts allowed them to further their learning. These treatises also allowed them to make a career out of practicing commonplace and simple medical procedures in the countryside.<sup>98</sup> Worth claims that Dolet actually had somewhat of a monopoly on medical printing in Lyons.<sup>99</sup> His expertise in producing one of the most lucrative genres indicates again his interest in pandering to the market demand for vernacular books.

Dolet's reasons for supporting the vernacular also derive from politics. His ambition led him to open a press. His desire for fame led him to distinguish himself by championing the vernacular in service to his King. On August 10, 1539, François I signed the Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts, which requires the use of French in all judicial

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<sup>96</sup> Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, 210.

<sup>97</sup> Martin, *Histoire de l'édition française*, 267.

<sup>98</sup> Martin, *Histoire de l'édition française*, 267.

<sup>99</sup> Valerie Worth, *Practising Translation in Renaissance France: The Example of Étienne Dolet* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 50.

documents and legislation. Their effects were diverse. A normative language made a more effective judicial system. However, as Danielle Trudeau argues in her article “L’Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts et la langue française: Histoire ou interprétation?,” the edict had the adverse effect of annihilating any existing provincial languages, of which there were many.<sup>100</sup> With the obstacle of less popular languages receding the idea of France as a unified nation grew in both the ideological and linguistic sense.

Dolet was eventually able to begin a correspondence with Guillaume Budé, the famous humanist and librarian to François I. Within this correspondence Dolet’s admiration for the progression of the vernacular, endorsed by the King, is evident, as well as Dolet’s expressed wishes to better this movement. On April 22, 1536, he wrote to Budé, from Lyon, that he wished to make the study of the history of France, complete with its own national language, the work of his life. He mentions briefly that he is only in need of the proper financing.<sup>101</sup>

Dolet’s enthusiasm for the transition from the usage of Latin to vernacular can also be explored in the reality of printing in Renaissance France. As a master printer, Dolet would have been part of the educated class. Technically, as a published writer, he was more of an intellectual than a tradesman. However, coming from humble beginnings, it was also necessary for Dolet’s private printing press to remain lucrative. At the time, most academic writing was in Latin, while commercial success in the world of books could largely be found in printing inexpensive books in the vernacular. Therefore, it could be argued that Dolet’s personal evolution from Latin to French had a strong

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<sup>100</sup> Danielle Trudeau, “L’Ordonnance de Villers-Cotterêts et la langue française: Histoire ou interprétation?,” *Bibliothèque d’Humanisme et Renaissance* 45, no. 3 (1983): 461-472.

<sup>101</sup> Dolet, *Correspondance*, 179.



mercantile aspect. However, Dolet's experience illustrates a vivid example of how intertwined were classical and vernacular languages in the printing world of the Renaissance and it was possible for a printer to mediate between the two.

Dolet's life as a printer contributed in many small ways to the gradual shift in his preference for French over Latin. The product of these factors is *La Manière de bien traduire*, in 1540, which crystallizes his attitude towards French by justifying the necessity for translation from classical languages to vernacular ones.

## 4 | *La Manière de bien traduire*

The structure of *La Manière* is organized around five points “of necessity.” The content of these points focuses primarily on the issue of adapting the sense of one language into the system of another. His principles revolve around the difficult balancing of form and interpretation that remains a matter of debate in modern studies of translation. The thesis of *La Manière* is that the translator must be allowed to exercise flexibility of style when interpreting texts. The ramifications of this new idea in regards to both the role of the translator and Dolet’s influence on the vernacular will be discussed in the next chapter.

Dolet’s first rule is the prerequisites for those eligible to practice translation. By creating boundaries, Dolet gives translation a sense of elitism, stipulating that it is an activity reserved for the educated classes:

“In the first place, the translator must understand perfectly the sense and matter of the author he is translating, for having this understanding he will never be obscure in his translations, and if the author he is translating is difficult [*scabreux*] in any way he will be able to render him easy and entirely understandable.”<sup>102</sup>

Reserving translation for educated men served a dual purpose. It placed Dolet, as a mediocre classicist but well-known translator, into the highest realm of intellectuals. It also ensured that French translations of classical texts would be well-composed and therefore useful to vernacular standardization.

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<sup>102</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 5.

To illustrate his first rule, Dolet employs an example from a translation of Cicero concerning the usage *animus* or *anima*. He asserts that this sort of translation practice would be impossible without having “a great understanding of Cicero’s sense [*une grande intelligence du sens de Ciceron*].”<sup>103</sup> Dolet warns the translator about the necessity of transferring the true substance of the source text. However, he also reminds the translator to be aware of the style and idiomatical structure of the vernacular target language. Worth asserts that, when acting as a translator, Dolet believed himself to be a sort of interpreter.<sup>104</sup> I would take this suggestion even further, to say that Dolet viewed himself as a medium between Latin and French. He saw himself as charged with the sacred task of translating text. His theories here stem directly from Dolet’s larger intellectual pursuits such as his commitment to imitate as closely as possible the style of Cicero in *Imitatione Ciceronianus Adversus Erasmus*.<sup>105</sup> If the translator fully understands the source texts, which Dolet clearly believed he did of Cicero, then he can more aptly imitate the style of the author and thereby enhance his own rhetorical capabilities. By bringing translation into the realm of scholarly work, Dolet ensured that ignorant print apprentices who employed word-for-word transliterative methods would no longer practice translation. This was essential to the evolution of worthy translation practice..

Dolet’s second principle of translation concerns itself with the target language, in his case, French. As the translator is both interpreting and making art, he must be sure not to taint or obscure the beauty of either the source or target languages. His first rule

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<sup>103</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 5.

<sup>104</sup> Worth, *Practising Translation*, 53.

<sup>105</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 206-207.

alludes to the fact that, most often, source languages were classical ones whose meaning should not be distorted. Dolet's insistence that the target language, or vernacular one, must similarly not be tainted suggests that the vernacular had had some status as an art form as well. He writes, the translator must:

“have perfect knowledge of the author he is translating, and be likewise excellent in the language into which he is going to translate. In this way he will not violate or diminish [*n'amoindrira*] the majesty of the one language or the other.”<sup>106</sup>

Dolet might have been aware of the type of language hybridization<sup>107</sup> that was occurring in Europe at the time. For example, in 1499, Aldus Manutius the Italian humanist composed his bizarre love story *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* entirely in a unique Latinate Italian.<sup>108</sup> Dolet, like a modern day language conservationist, knew that “every language has its own properties, turns of phrase [*translations en diction*], expressions [*locutions*], subtleties, and passions [*uehemences*] that are particular to it.”<sup>109</sup> He sought to understand and appreciate these differences and also to conserve the unique flavor of even the vulgar tongues' idioms.

Dolet's third point touches upon an intensely debated issue in Renaissance intellectual circles. The question of translating word-for-word from the source text versus exercising flexibility and creativity in constructing the vernacular text was a point of contention for early modern language theorists. Dolet writes, “one must not be servile

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<sup>106</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 5.

<sup>107</sup> Peter Burke, “The Hybridization of Languages in Early Modern Europe” in *European Review : Interdisciplinary Journal of the Academia Europaea*, 2006.

<sup>108</sup> Rosemary Trippe, “The “Hypnerotomachia Poliphili”, Image, Text, and Vernacular Poetics,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 55, no. 4 (Winter, 2002): 1222-1258.

<sup>109</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 5.

[*asseruir*] to the point of rendering word for word.”<sup>110</sup> Dolet’s technique, based on style as opposed to word-for-word translation, is in direct contrast to the literalist camp. This side was headed by Robert Estienne who in 1528 had published *Le Manière de tourner en langue françoise les verbes actifz, passifz, gerundifz, supins & participes*. Estienne’s work was a glossary that listed every Latin word side by side with its French equivalent.<sup>111</sup> In the small amount of written theory surrounding the lexicon, Estienne negated the supremacy of syntax asserting instead that literal word-for-word transcriptions were more honest.<sup>112</sup> Dolet’s work contradicts this technique, arguing that the translator must “give thought to meanings without regarding the order of words, and set to work in such a way that the author’s intention will be expressed while preserving precisely the property of the one and the other language [*gardant curieusement la propriété de l’une, l’autre langue*].”<sup>113</sup>

Dolet’s reverence for language reflects common humanist sentiment at the time, as he continued by saying that rendering word-for-word translations “corrupt [*deprauent*] the sense of the author they are translating and do not express the grace and perfection [*la grace, perfection*] of the one and the other language.”<sup>114</sup> Dolet’s choice words of praise underline again the seriousness and sacredness with which he viewed the task of the translator, charged both with interpreting and creating art. Furthermore, his comments demonstrate the changing nature of his attitude towards French, which might now be referred to with equal “grace and perfection” as Latin.

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<sup>110</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 5.

<sup>111</sup> Robert Estienne, *La Manière de tourner en langue françoise les verbes* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1972).

<sup>112</sup> Estienne, *La Manière de tourner en langue françoise les verbes*, 46.

<sup>113</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 5.

<sup>114</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 6.

An example of Dolet exercising originality in his own translation practice is his translation of his own work on the birth of son Claude, *Genethliacum*<sup>115</sup> (1539) into *L'Avant-Naissance*<sup>116</sup> (1539). Dolet employed great flexibility in translating the introduction, adding many more verses to the French target text than existed in the Latin source text.<sup>117</sup> This exemplifies Dolet's artistic attempt to communicate the content of the text, while adapting the concision of the Latin style to the verbose syntax of French.

Dolet's third rule reiterates that vernacular languages might be enriched by translation. If a French translation has its genesis in a more-perfect Latin text, it follows that the target language inherits by contact a small fraction of that perfect form. The subtext of *La Manière* is Dolet's prediction of a future hegemony of vulgar tongues. He sought to alter and shape this course by ensuring that French, Italian, German etc. are all codified based on the paragon of Latin. Translating between two languages inevitably alters both languages over time. Worth believes that Dolet made "an attempt to bridge the gap between the ideal translation and the imperfect conditions in which an individual act of translation is carried out in allowing that neologisms may be necessary in some rare cases."<sup>118</sup> I would go even further to say that Dolet saw this exchange and fraternization of languages as crucial to linguistic development. The translator is pivotal to language evolution as, the more he seeks to capture the Latin sense of his source text, the more he searches for new means of expression and "rhetorical structures"<sup>119</sup> in the target

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<sup>115</sup> Etienne Dolet, *Genethliacum Claudii Doleti, Stephani Doleti filii*, (Lyons: Estienne Dolet, 1539).

<sup>116</sup> Etienne Dolet, *L'Avant Naissance de Claude Dolet, filz de Estienne Dolet*, (Lyons: Estienne Dolet, 1539).

<sup>117</sup> Worth, *Practising Renaissance Translation*, 214.

<sup>118</sup> Worth, *Practising Renaissance Translation*, 57.

<sup>119</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 32.

language. For example, as Dolet translated *Gentiliacum* into *Avant-Naissance*, he appropriated for French the classical technique of formal comparison, which Worth describes as when “the writer compares his subject to another object or set of objects, making the hypothesis of the comparison explicit on the syntactic level by such terms as *sic*, *ut*, or *qualis*.”<sup>120</sup> Dolet adapts this technique for French, using “plus que” or “quant.”<sup>121</sup>

In the fourth rule, Dolet relapses momentarily on his previous confidence in the artistic significance of vernacular languages, admitting, “the Greek and Latin languages are much richer in terms than is French.”<sup>122</sup> He reserved some doubts about the benefits of bringing classical languages into too close of contact with vulgar tongues and bids the reader not to diminish the glory of Latin by forming anachronistic neologisms, writing:

“should it therefore happen that you translate a Latin book into one or another of these (even into French), you should avoid adopting words too close to Latin and little used in the past, but be content with the common tongue without introducing [*innouer*] any new terms foolishly or out of reprehensible curiousness...”<sup>123</sup>

To do so would be, essentially, a disfigurement of both languages. The fourth rule is also reminiscent of Dolet’s denial of the word-for-word method of translation. Sometimes, he stipulates, the sense of the Latin text is better understood by the careful manipulation of existing vernacular structures.<sup>124</sup> Vernacular languages, “such languages as French, Italian, Spanish, and that of Germany, of England, and other vulgar tongues [*aultres*

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<sup>120</sup> Worth, *Practising Renaissance Translation*, 186.

<sup>121</sup> Worth, *Practising Renaissance Translation*, 186.

<sup>122</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 6.

<sup>123</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 6.

<sup>124</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 6.

*vulgaires*],”<sup>125</sup> though used ubiquitously for normal communication, were still regarded warily in the intellectual realm as unrefined and insufficient for expressing complex theory. Dolet believed that the fourth rule was “more to be observed in languages not reduced to an art [*non reduictes en art*] than in others.”<sup>126</sup>

Dolet’s fifth rule for translation returns to a discussion of the style and art of language, reminding the reader of his own intention to write a theoretical discussion on translation as opposed to a technical blueprint on the mechanics of the practice. “But what does it [translation] consist of?” he rhetorically asks the reader, “Nothing other than the observation of rhetorical numbers [*Nombres oratoires*].”<sup>127</sup> While at first the invocation of numbers and mathematics might lead the reader to believe that Dolet looked to create a functional method for translating texts, Dolet’s subsequent explanation reminds the reader of his esoteric meaning. Literature and language for Dolet was a holistic experience, to be viewed, imbibed and heard. “Remembering rhetorical numbers” is to compose “a joining and arranging of terms with such sweetness [*douceur*] that not alone the soul is pleased, but also the ear is delighted and never hurt by such harmony of language...”<sup>128</sup> Dolet was foremost an artist. “Rhetorical numbers” most likely meant style and manner of composition, or what Christie calls “harmony and rhythm.”<sup>129</sup> The end product of a successful translation should be, according to Dolet, a pleasing work of art in and of itself. Dolet’s work in translation carried with it the aforementioned

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<sup>125</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 6.

<sup>126</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 6.

<sup>127</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 6-7.

<sup>128</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 7.

<sup>129</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 344.



commercial and intellectually progressive components (dissemination of knowledge), and also an artistic component.

Dolet's fifth rule reiterates the sacred artistic role of the translator. His eloquent rhetoric compares words to "precious stones" that, when in "a confused heap...cannot display their luster because they are not properly arranged."<sup>130</sup> Dolet's style of writing raises the question again of his true identity and passion, and the abiding dichotomy between his professional and artistic life. He returns to his role as Dolet the academic by reminding the reader at the end of the fifth rule that his great object of study, Cicero, "was a great observer of numbers."<sup>131</sup> The fact that Dolet wished more than all else to imitate Cicero in his own personal artistic endeavors relates in a complex way to Dolet's theory on translation itself, principally that an artist (the translator) can work within the boundaries of another's work to create something unique and sovereign and yet a true imitation of the original.

*La Manière* represents a turning point in Dolet's linguistic preferences. It is the culmination of his exposure to the vernacular in his life as a printer and also the justification for his future commitment to writing and printing in French. Understanding the logic behind his five points helps the modern reader to follow his intellectual evolution. After *La Manière* was published in 1540, Dolet dedicated the remaining six years of his life to composing primarily in French.<sup>132</sup> The meaning of *La Manière* and Dolet's evolution will be discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>130</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 7.

<sup>131</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 7.

<sup>132</sup> Etienne Dolet and Claude Longeon, *Préfaces françaises* (Geneva: Droz, 1979), 13.

## 5 | The Consequences of *La Manière*

The functionality of *La Manière* as a guide to technical translation remains a question amongst modern scholars. Worth believes that, because Dolet's work was so abstract and theoretical, it is useless in pursuing the actual method of early modern translation.<sup>133</sup> Subsequent language theorists, such as an English scholar Lawrence Humphreys, wrote complex charts on how to systematically translate between languages.<sup>134</sup> However, I would argue that *La Manière* provides concrete evidence of Dolet's attitude towards French and is therefore crucial in understanding his personal journey towards the vernacular.

When Dolet wrote *La manière de bien traduire*, no important work on translation had previously been published. However, Norton expressed that *La Manière*, as “an articulated philosophy of translation,” is “little more than a tardy response to conditions existing long before on the level of practice.”<sup>135</sup> Norton believes that since translation as a practice existed long before 1540, Dolet's theory is merely a recording of inherited ideas, particularly from 15<sup>th</sup> century Italian humanists such as Salutati or Bruni. In effect, he asserts that *La Manière* is not more than an “effort to conceptualize the translative process” and “appears to be a direct outgrowth of humanist thought, of a belief in the figurative power of translation,” in that translation deserved a canonical treatise dedicated

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<sup>133</sup> Worth, *Practising Renaissance Translation*, 58.

<sup>134</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 11.

<sup>135</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 31.

to its own explication.<sup>136</sup> Norton's sentiments align with the idea that Dolet set great store in the power of translation. Perhaps Norton focuses too narrowly on Dolet as a linguist and a more complete approach might be to look at him as a multifaceted and complex man, an ideal representative of a generation that operated under late medieval thought on the nature of language and imitation of ancient texts. Paul Chavy agrees that Dolet's philosophy of translation absolutely has strong roots in the past, and was by no means unique or foundational.<sup>137</sup> However, Chavy also seems to be of the same sentiment as George Steiner in his thorough exploration of translation, *After Babel*, namely, that Dolet is worthy of note as a member of a longer humanist dialectic.<sup>138</sup>

The only known contemporary reference to *La Manière* is a passing note in Joachim du Bellay's *The Defense and Enrichment of the French Language* [*Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Françoyse*], published in 1549, three years after the death of Dolet.<sup>139</sup> Dolet had actually dedicated *La Manière* to Guillaume du Bellay, a member of Joachim's family, indicating the intimate circle of learned men and humanists that existed at the time.

The first book of the *Defense* ends with Du Bellay's noting that he has focused more on French as a written art and yet, however, he is "not ignorant that Etienne Dolet, a man of good judgment in our vulgar tongue, has composed *The French Orator*."<sup>140</sup> Du

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<sup>136</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 104.

<sup>137</sup> Paul Chavy, "Les Traductions humanistes au début de la Renaissance française: traductions médiévales, traductions modernes," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 8, 284-306. (1981), 291.

<sup>138</sup> George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 262.

<sup>139</sup> Du Bellay, *Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Françoyse*, 317-417.

<sup>140</sup> [*je n'ignore point qu'Etienne Dolet, homme de bon jugement en notre vulgaire, a formé l'Orateur Françoyse*]

Bellay continued by saying that he has instead chosen “not to speak for the orator but instead for the poet [*ne parle de l’orateur comme du poète*].”<sup>141</sup> In a similar vein, Du Bellay begins the second book of the *Deffence* by asserting “Since the poet and the orator are like the two pillars that support the edifice of each language, leaving aside the one that I understand has been built by others, I wanted...to draft [*ebaucher*] as well as I can the one that remained,”<sup>142</sup> implying, then, that *La Manière*, the one “built” by Dolet, and other remaining parts of *L’Orateur*, was the tome on oration in the French language. This further substantiates Norton’s theory that *La Manière* is not, in fact, a utilitarian treatise on translation. Rather, as a small part of a larger work on oration, Norton believes that *La Manière* has been overvalued, “flawed in both structure and definition,”<sup>143</sup> and that the role of translation in Dolet’s life was not a large one. Essentially, his hypothesis is that Dolet provided an amateurish foundation on which future intellectuals might build on translation theory. I would argue that Dolet, in writing on the vernacular *in* the vernacular, reveals his own transition from Latin to the vernacular.

*La Manière* demonstrates how Dolet combined intellectually his views on the relative lack of refinement in the vernacular with his faith in the Latin language. It is a manifestation of his intellectual evolution because it justifies translation as an artistic endeavor. He recognized the existing beauty and benefit of French and furthermore thought to enrich it through translation. I would also argue that *La Manière* is a clue as to how Dolet integrated the two sides of his life, professional and intellectual. *La Manière* is

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Du Bellay, *Deffence*, 361

<sup>141</sup> Du Bellay, *Deffence*, 361.

<sup>142</sup> Du Bellay, *Deffence*, 363.

<sup>143</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 215.

a work of academic theory on the very subject of Dolet's practical livelihood. In Dolet's era, translation carried connotations of the quotidian. It was commonplace work with the day-to-day functions of the printing house. Only later would translation be fully recognized as a great progressive movement within the Renaissance, a benchmark in the universalisation of knowledge. Dolet is a personification of this movement, as he was one of the first humanists to compose theory on translation, even coining the terms *traducteur* and *traduction*.<sup>144</sup>

*La Manière* is not a procedural approach to the practice of translation. Therefore, not only is *La Manière* a defense of the necessity of translating both the sense and form of texts, which reflects Dolet's earlier thoughts on imitation, it is also a deification of the translator himself. *La Manière* is the greatest defense of Etienne Dolet's life: he made his practice, translation, into an art, his art.

Dolet would have known only the Horace's thoughts on language and not necessarily the generation of Italian humanists that came immediately before him.<sup>145</sup> Norton, on the subject of Cicero, Quintilian, and Horace, believes they "represented, for the Renaissance, the closest approximation to a methodized system for translation that was available at the time."<sup>146</sup> Should Dolet have lived one century later, he would have

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<sup>144</sup> James S. Holmes, "Introduction to *La Manière de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre*", in *Modern Poetry in Translation*, 41-2 (March 1981), 53-6, from *Translation: Theory and Practice*, eds. Daniel Weissbort and Astradur Eysteinsson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 73.

<sup>145</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 14.

<sup>146</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 15.

most certainly fought on the side of antiquity in the French Quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns.<sup>147</sup>

The most intriguing part of *La Manière*, and what separates it from other Latin treatises on translation at the time, is that it is composed in French and is therefore an even more integral part of the bigger transition from Latin to the vernacular that was occurring in Europe at the time. This transition was occurring in government documents and artistic publications alike. The bourgeoisie, a negligible class during the Middle Ages, gained important economic and therefore cultural influence at the beginning of the Renaissance. Not only did they provide commercial demand for interesting and amusing texts written by *modern* authors, they also insisted in no longer being barred from religious devotion because of illiteracy in Latin. One of the primary goals of the Reformers was to provide a vernacular translation of the Bible.<sup>148</sup> Not only did *La Manière* contain information and rhetoric meant to persuade modern scholars to translate carefully and frequently between Latin and vernacular languages, Dolet also set an example by composing in French.

*La Manière* had a second effect on French, that of centralization and systematization. At the time of *La Manière*, Dolet had already published his

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<sup>147</sup> Strangely enough, there was published, in Paris of that same year, a work on translation so similar in theory to *La Manière* that it is difficult to assume that the authors were not contemporaries. Joachim Périon's *De Optimo Genere interpretandi Commentarii*, though not as remarkable as *La Manière*, for not being written in the vernacular nor having as high a rhetorical style, shares the same basic principals concerning translation. However, there exists no record of Dolet or Périon ever encountering the other's work. The unlikely similarity of their respective scholarship proves that there existed general opinions on the nature of translation at the time.

Ioachimi Perionii Benedict. *Cormorriaceni de Optimo Genere interpretandi Commentarii* (Paris, Ioann. Lodoicus Tiletanus, 1540). B.N.R. 5826. Norton, 217.

<sup>148</sup> Jean-François Gilmont, "Protestant Reformations and Reading," in *A History of Reading in the West*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003). 213-237.

*Commentarii*, reprinted annually between 1536 and 1540,<sup>149</sup> establishing himself as expert in Latin. His reasons for wanting to compose the *Orateur* could very well have been to apply his skills in Latin to the task of perfecting the French language. He prescribed a method called *constructio*, a common concept at the time, which sought to refine the French grammar system by reducing it into the known Latin forms. Norton defines *constructio* as “dismantling, reordering, unraveling, and, ultimately, interpretation.”<sup>150</sup>

In a letter dated May 4, 1540, one month before the publication of *La Manière*, Dolet addressed the French people to whom he dedicates his work, claiming such lofty and engaging goals as perfection of their mother language. He said:

“...I know that when it was wished to reduce the Greek and Latin languages to a system, this was not accomplished by one man but by many, and the same thing will equally happen with respect to the French language, and gradually by means of the labour of learned men it will also be brought into the same state of perfection that these are. For this reason I beg of you to take my labour in good part, and if it does not completely reform our language, I hope that you will think that it is at least a commencement of an undertaking which may ultimately arrive at such a result that foreigners shall no longer be able to call us barbarians.”<sup>151</sup>

It is interesting to note Dolet’s usage of the word “barbarians [*barbares*],” as it carries specific language connotations. The etymology of “barbare” is the onomatopoeic Latin

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<sup>149</sup> Dolet, *Bibliographie*, 5-18.

<sup>150</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 26.

<sup>151</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 343.

term for the sound of northern tribal communication. In *Le Thresor de la langue françoise* by Jean Nicot in 1606, the definition of “barbare” is expanded to include anyone “who is not of our language [*et qui n’est point de nostre langage*].”<sup>152</sup> Dolet invoked a classical term to clarify that he wished to refine French and thereby establish identity through language.

*La Manière* was meant to be part of a larger work on the French language, *L’Orateur françoys*, which was never completed. Commentaries on languages were common practice amongst a generation who looked to explore the richness of their vernacular languages, such as that of Périon, or Thomas Sebillet’s *Art poétique françoys*<sup>153</sup>. Dolet prefaces *La Manière* with his reasons for halting momentarily his study of classical languages in favor of this treatise on a vulgar tongue:

“For six years (Oh French people) leaving for several hours my principal studies (which are in reading of the languages Latin and Greek), wanting to illuminate you by all means, I have composed in our language a work entitled the French Orator...”<sup>154</sup>

Dolet published three chapters of *L’Orateur françoys* in 1540: *Le Maniere de bien traduire d’une langue en aultre*<sup>155</sup>, *La punctuation de la langue francoise*<sup>156</sup>, and *Les*

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<sup>152</sup> *Dictionnaires d’autrefois*. The ARTFL Project. <http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdicollook.pl?strippedhw=barbare>

<sup>153</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 96.

<sup>154</sup> [Depuis six ans (ô peuple François) desrobbant quelques heures de mon estude principalle (qui est en la lecture de la langue Latine et Grecque), te voulant aussi illustrer par tous moyens, j’ay composé en nostre langue ung Oeuvre intitulé l’Orateur François...]

Dolet, *La Manière*, 3.

<sup>155</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 4.

<sup>156</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 7.



*accents de la langue francoyse*<sup>157</sup>. The unfinished portion of *L'Orateur françois* was meant to include chapters on grammar, orthography, pronunciation, and oratorical and poetic art.<sup>158</sup>

Dolet first published *La Manière de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre* at his own press in Lyons in June of 1540.<sup>159</sup> The first edition appeared in quarto size, made up of twenty folios. The first page includes an address to the reader followed by a title page with the newest device of Dolet, a hand caught in action chopping a log, surrounded by the inscription "Scabra, Et Impolita Ad Amussim Dolo, Atque Perpolio." Beneath the device is the inscription "At Lyons, at the house of Dolet himself. X. D. XL. With privilege for ten years."<sup>160</sup> Christie stated that these three chapters of the intended *Orateur* had the "greatest immediate success of any original work of Dolet."<sup>161</sup> Indeed, the work was reedited many times, by Dolet or by other writers. It was sometimes published in its entirety or as three separate works, sometimes abridged or sometimes joined together with other grammatical treatises.<sup>162</sup> In 1541, Dolet reprinted a very similar edition of *La Manière*, with several orthographical differences, and then almost identical versions of the 1541 edition in 1542 and 1543.<sup>163</sup>

Dolet's choice to print *Le Maniere de bien traduire d'une langue en aultre*, *La punctuation de la langue francoyse*, and *Les accents de la langue francoyse* first, of each

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<sup>157</sup> Dolet, *La Manière*, 11.

<sup>158</sup> [*La grammaire, L'orthographe...La prononciation, L'origine d'aulcunes dictions...L'art oratoire, L'art poétique...*]

Dolet, *La Manière*, 3.

<sup>159</sup> Dolet, *Bibliographie*, 60.

<sup>160</sup> Dolet, *Bibliographie*, 61.

<sup>161</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 345.

<sup>162</sup> Dolet, *Bibliographie*, 60.

<sup>163</sup> Dolet, *Bibliographie*, 60-64.

of his planned chapters for *L'Orateur*, would most likely have been that those were the most relevant aspects of his life at the time, and also the ones he was most qualified to write on.<sup>164</sup> As a printer, Dolet would have regularly “encountered the problems of standardizing the use of accents and punctuation.”<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, Dolet would already have been very familiar with the practice of translation itself, as he has also already edited translations done by others<sup>166</sup> as well published his translation of *Genethliacum Claudii Doleti* of 1540.<sup>167</sup> The fact remains that Dolet composed this intensely intimate work first in Latin. His scholarly acceptance, up until the moment of *La Manière*, hinged on the value of his Latin scholarship. He even prefaces *La Manière* with, “I do not ignore the fact...that many will be immensely shocked to see come from me this present work: understanding that in the past I completed all of my professional work totally in the Latin language.”<sup>168</sup> Dolet believed that readers of his work would be literally astonished to notice his transition to the vernacular, even momentarily. This points to both his understanding of contemporary cultural norms that distrusted vernacular languages in academia, and also suspicion of his own expertise in French. He justifies his embracing of French by listing, in one edition of *La Manière*, all of the other established scholars who have written in the language, “As for moderns, those who I know of such as Leonard Aretin, sannazare, Petrarque, Bembe (those of the Italians), and those in France, Budé,

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<sup>164</sup> Worth, *Practising Translation in Renaissance France*, 51.

<sup>165</sup> Worth, *Practising Translation in Renaissance France*, 51.

<sup>166</sup> Dolet, *Bibliographie*, 16-50.

<sup>167</sup> Dolet, *Bibliographie*, 57.

<sup>168</sup> [Je n'ignore pas...que plusieurs ne s'esbaussent grandement de ueoir sortir de moy ce present Oeuure: attendu que par le passé i'ay faict, fais encores maintenant profession totale de la langue Latine].  
Dolet, *La Manière*, 2.

Bouille, and master Sylvius.”<sup>169</sup> His preemptive justifications for publishing in French also suggests a need to defend his choice of the vernacular.

Much of the tension between the vernacular and Latin within Dolet’s *bibliographie* can be attributed to the fact that he and his contemporaries lived and worked in a time when the “bilingual orientation of grammar study is taking place in France and elsewhere.”<sup>170</sup> Any kind of classical philological study that was occurring at the time necessarily began to juxtapose and compare existing linguistic structures, that of French against Spanish, or Italian against Latin. Translation theory adheres to this. In 1533, Budé defines the field of philology in *De Philologia*. He delineates the philologist as both “restorer and interpolator [instauratrix atque interpolatrix].”<sup>171</sup> Dolet’s idea of translation is congruent with Budé’s theory. Dolet jointly believed in reestablishing (restoring) the sense of the source text within the target text, while also explaining or examining the structure of the source language, and therefore transformatively aligning it with the structure of the target language. Contact between two languages during translation was most often mutually beneficial for both languages.

Therefore, as a theoretical treatise and not a technical guide, *La Manière* raised the issue of translation to a status worthy of scholarly debate. It would no longer be the commonplace task of a journeyman printer. By raising the importance of translation, Dolet championed vernacular languages. He created the imperative for creating good

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<sup>169</sup> [Quant aux modernes, semblable chose que moy a faict Leonard Aretin, Sannazare, Petrarque, Bembe (ceulx cy Italiens), et en France, Budé, Bouille, et master Jacques Sylvius.] Dolet, Préfaces, 6.

<sup>170</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 30.

<sup>171</sup> Norton, *The Ideology and Language of Translation in Renaissance France and their Humanist Antecedents*, 29.

translations and, therefore, suggested the importance of the vernacular form of the target text as much as the translation of the classical source text's content.

*La Manière* is the result of Dolet's exposure to the printing world. It is a direct outcome of several propitious factors: his wish to create his own academic genre of scholarship, his astute understanding of the commercial benefit of vernacular printing and his wish to ingratiate himself to both his King and countrymen by valorizing French. All of these factors contributed to his transition from preference of Latin, and *La Manière* acts as his justification for how an avowed classical scholar could come to embrace French.

## 6 | Conclusion

The last facet of Dolet's life that contributed to his attitude towards the vernacular is his natural opposition to the Inquisition. Dolet's legacy focuses on his death and it would be remiss not to note the factors of his life that aligned with the Counter-Reformation.

An integral aspect of European language transformation resided in the Reformation, which sought to allow laymen to be their own intermediaries with God's word, primarily by publishing the Bible in translation. Dolet's choice to issue a plethora of vernacular texts, as well as to take the time to translate classical works into French, attracted the fatal attention of the French inquisition, which sought to condemn any known humanists for fear of their progressive and contagious philosophies. Whether or not Dolet himself held heretical beliefs is less relevant than the fact that he was touched by this institutionalized fear of knowledge. His story reflects the powerful role of vernacular translation in Reformation thought. Translation emerged as a popular subject of debate when Reformation leaders dared to reinterpret scripture by communicating the Word of God in vernacular languages. The intensity of Dolet's commitment to translation is evident. He was essentially killed for his commitment to translation, and to translate it well and according to his own stylistic principles. One wonders what the intellectual atmosphere was at the time that would engender such passion and self-sacrifice concerning language, ideas and a new order of things.

Dolet first experienced the Inquisition at the University of Toulouse. The University's faculty forced orthodox theology onto its students and few, true, progressive

humanists dared stand against the institution. Dolet allied himself with Jean de Pins, Bishop of Rieux, who believed himself a man of letters and not orthodoxy. In 1516, de Pins was himself in the business of translation, converting the Italian novel *Allobroica Narratio* to *Le tres vaillant Paris et la belle Vienne*.<sup>172</sup> Jean de Pins was later incarcerated by the Inquisition. In 1532, Dolet witnessed the burning of his humanist friend Jean de Caturce, who refused to repent his alleged heretical beliefs. Later in that same year, the clergy of Toulouse forced the intellectual Jean de Boyssone at pain of death to profess his faith in Catholicism.<sup>173</sup> Both were accused of harboring Lutheran or Calvinistic sentiments. Rather, they were simply men of letters, at the time enough of a crime to warrant death. Dolet's close association with this group of humanists would have certainly influenced his transition from Latin, which took on the veneer of the fatal rigidity of the Church, to French, a language that connoted modernity, progress and reform.

The confluence of factors in Dolet's life that contributed to his promotion of the vernacular existed contemporaneously in the lives of other Renaissance humanists who struggled against Church tyranny. Gryphius defied the Church by printing the Hebrew lexicon and Joachim du Bellay spent his life striving to further valorize French.

Furthermore, *La Manière* addressed key contemporary issues regarding religion. Formal intellectual texts would presumably need to employ well-established grammar and syntax, and Dolet was writing at the beginning of this process of standardization. This was nowhere more apparent than in the translation of sacred religious texts.

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<sup>172</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 50-60.

<sup>173</sup> Christie, *Étienne Dolet : The Martyr of the Renaissance*, 50.

Translation of holy word was problematic because it meant the interpretation of the word of God. The Reformation brought issues of translation into the forefront of academic dialogue.

There are some examples of humanists who had a more intense struggle with transitioning from Latin to the vernacular than did Dolet. John Calvin, recognized humanist, spurned his native French when composing religious text. In reference to his *Institutes*, he said “I expose and I confirm more solidly the same doctrine by expressing myself in another and, if I am not mistaken, clearer fashion” than when he had composed, in French, *Le Petit Traicté de la Cène* [*Short Treatise on the Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ*].<sup>174</sup> Issues of translation concerning religious texts carry more cultural significance, given the fundamental faith that the Bible is the word of God. Luther used harsh deriding vernacular German when he once said:

“I bleed blood and water to give the Prophets in the vulgar tongue. Good God, what work! How difficult it is to force the Hebrew writers to speak German! Not wishing to abandon their Hebrew nature, they refuse to flow into German barbarity. It’s as if the nightingale, losing its sweet song, was forced to imitate the cuckoo and its monotonous note.”<sup>175</sup>

The issue of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation is inseparable from consideration of vernacular languages in early modern Europe. Most often, however, use of vernacular literature, in scripture and elsewhere, was paramount to dissemination of

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<sup>174</sup> Jean François Gilmont and Karin Maag, *Reformation and the Book* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1998), 218.

<sup>175</sup> Gilmont, *Reformation and the Book*, 219.

Reformation ideas. Luther reforms his opinion of the vernacular, and in his “Treatise on good works, 1520,” states:

“Christendome would have reaped no small advantage and would have been more benefited by this than by those heavy, weighty tomes and those *questiones* which are only handled in the schools among learned schoolmen... We have to interrogate the mother in her house, the children in the streets, the common man in the market, and consider their mouths to know how they speak in order to translate accordingly. Then they will understand and will note that we are speaking German with them.”<sup>176</sup>

Luther’s thoughts, penned only twenty years before Dolet’s *Manière*, suggest the same egalitarian approach to education, specifying that it be through the vernacular that true reform and progress can occur. Dolet’s association with the print journeymen, as they fought for higher pay, parallels Luther’s radical questioning of existing hierarchies, supported as they are by inaccessible “tomes” in Latin.

If religion, heresy, reform and inquisition betoken the most dramatic issue of the time, then questions of vernacular use and proliferation are inextricably involved. The very act of translating scripture into vernaculars called into question matters of interpretation and, therefore, the Church’s role as medium between laymen and the divine. Dolet cemented his fate by claiming that the translator now possessed significant enough importance to decode and translate words that might previously have been considered sacred in and of themselves. In deciphering words, and the rhetorical structures into which they are placed in order to communicate a meaning, Dolet rendered

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<sup>176</sup> Gilmont, *Reformation and the Book*, 218.



the words themselves transmutable and therefore no more than material, intrinsically lacking in divine essence. Dolet deified the translator and bestowed on him the capability of interpreting text, be it religious or not.

Dolet's notions concerning translation, expression and the meaning of words extend even further into heretical territory. Essentially, Dolet believed in a complete separation between the craft of the artist (be they author or translator) and the content of his text. This is evidenced in Dolet's *ad hominem* exchanges with Erasmus, who believed that art was inseparable from a moral hermeneutic imperative.<sup>177</sup> In being an early subscriber to *l'art pour l'art*, Dolet gave the translator greater flexibility in reforming the source text into a more eloquent target text. Dolet challenged Erasmus, by separating, in his own practice, literary art from religion.<sup>178</sup>

This willingness to work with controversial texts that might carry religious significance, such as *Axiochus*, was Dolet's contribution to French as a language. In believing that important texts, be they classical or scriptural, should be translated not only in order to communicate their content, but also in an eloquent and well-formed manner, Dolet declared that French was worthy of composition. Dolet believed in the music of language which, when choreographed correctly, could be judged not only for its power of transmitting knowledge, but also for its inherent artistic merits.

Simultaneously, Dolet served French by elevating it to classical standards. In *La Manière*, Dolet argues that, through translation, the vernacular languages might be enriched by inherited classical structures and vocabulary. Latin carried the beauty and

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<sup>177</sup> Lloyd Jones, "Erasmus and Dolet on the Ethics of Imitation and the Hermeneutic Imperative," 36-37.

<sup>178</sup> Lloyd Jones, "Erasmus and Dolet on the Ethics of Imitation and the Hermeneutic Imperative," 37.

prestige in which the Renaissance humanists regarded it and, Dolet claimed, that French might one day attain this status, should the two languages be exposed to one another often enough. Therefore, Dolet made translation from Latin a necessity in raising haute-French out of the provincial dialects and protecting it from the influence of barbaric languages.

To distill the arc of Dolet's career as a printer and its significance in this work, would be to create two generalized sides out of an abstract and protracted conflict between Latin and the vernacular, where Latin suggests the old order of the oppressive upper class and obsession with the unsurpassable perfection of classical theory, and the vernacular represents progress in universal literacy and the advancement of new and modern modes of scholarship. The last facet of this over-simplified divide would be the association of Latin with the conservative and illiberal Catholic Church and vernacular languages with the progressive, humanist-friendly Reformed Churches of Calvin, Luther and England

Dolet gained entry into the intellectual world by becoming a printer. His experience in the early modern world of printing helped him to evolve from a strictly classical scholar to a supporter of vernacular French. His career as a printer exposed him to the humanist movement and instilled in him the desire to spread knowledge to his countrymen and to serve his nation by printing in French. He carved his own niche in the realm of academia by enlarging the role of the translator. Dolet's valorization of translation, in turn, promoted the use of the vernacular. Furthermore, his theory of translation taught others how to enrich the beauty of vulgar tongues, leaving a lasting

impact on the form of vernacular languages. Dolet was an artist who preferred form to content, and believed in the beauty of perfect composition.

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